National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences

Seasonal hazards and health risks in lower-income countries: Field testing a multi-disciplinary approach

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Abstract:

Understanding how risks to human health change as a result of seasonal variations in environmental conditions is likely to become of increasing importance in the context of climatic change, especially in lower-income countries. A multi-disciplinary approach can be a useful tool for improving understanding, particularly in situations where existing data resources are limited but the environmental health implications of seasonal hazards may be high. This short article describes a multi-disciplinary approach combining analysis of changes in levels of environmental contamination, seasonal variations in disease incidence and a social scientific analysis of health behaviour. The methodology was field-tested in a peri-urban environment in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam, where poor households face alternate seasonal extremes in the local environment as the water level in the Delta changes from flood to dry season. Low-income households in the research sites rely on river water for domestic uses, including provision of drinking water, and it is commonly perceived that the seasonal changes alter risk from diarrhoeal diseases and other diseases associated with contamination of water. The discussion focuses on the implementation of the methodology in the field, and draws lessons from the research process that can help in refining and developing the approach for application in other locations where seasonal dynamics of disease risk may have important consequences for public health.

Source: http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2796494

Resource Description

Communication: ☑

resource focus on research or methods on how to communicate or frame issues on climate change; surveys of attitudes, knowledge, beliefs about climate change

A focus of content

Communication Audience: ☑

audience to whom the resource is directed

Public

Exposure : ☑

weather or climate related pathway by which climate change affects health

Extreme Weather Event

Extreme Weather Event: Flooding

Geographic Feature: ☑

resource focuses on specific type of geography

Other Geographical Feature

Other Geographical Feature : peri-urban

Geographic Location: ☑

resource focuses on specific location

Non-United States

Non-United States: Asia

Asian Region/Country: Other Asian Country

Other Asian Country: Vietnam

Health Impact: ☑

specification of health effect or disease related to climate change exposure

Infectious Disease

Infectious Disease: Foodborne/Waterborne Disease

Population of Concern: A focus of content

Resource Type: ☑

format or standard characteristic of resource

Research Article

Timescale: ☑

time period studied

Time Scale Unspecified